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ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-15	AID-01	AMAD-01	A-01	CA-02	CCO-00
	CIAE-00	SJK-01	CTME-00	C-01	DEAE-00	DODE-00	DS-00
	EB-01	FBO-01	HA-09	H-01	IMMC-01	INM-01	INRE-00
	INR-01	IO-19	LAB-04	L-03	ADS-00	M-01	NSAE-00
	NSCE-00	OCS-06	OIC-02	OIG-01	OMB-01	OPR-01	PA-01
	PM-01	PRS-01	P-01	RP-10	SCT-03	SIL-01	SNP-01
	SP-01	SR-01	SSC-01	SSO-00	SS-01	STR-20	TRSE-00
	T-01	USIE-00	USSS-00	FMP-01	/121W		

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O 202201Z FEB 92 ZFF4
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8512
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PM PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 01919

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: PREL, MARR, PINR, PHUM, ASEC, PGOV, SNAR, VE
SUBJECT: PART 12: AFTER THE COUP ATTEMPT - FEBRUARY 20

REF(S): CARACAS 01847

1. (C) - ENTIRE TEXT.
2. CABINET TO RESIGN TODAY?

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THE MAJOR NEWSPAPERS ON FEBRUARY 20 REPORTED THAT ALL
CABINET MINISTERS WILL SUBMIT THEIR RESIGNATIONS DURING
TODAY'S SCHEDULED COUNCIL OF MINISTERS' MEETING. THIS
WILL ALLOW PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ TO MAKE THE
CABINET CHANGES THAT VARIOUS POLITICAL PARTIES,
INCLUDING HIS OWN, ACCION DEMOCRATICA, HAVE DEMANDED IN
THE AFTERMATH OF THE ATTEMPTED COUP. THE MEDIA STATED
THAT PLANNING MINISTER MIGUEL RODRIGUEZ, WHO HAS BECOME
THE SCAPEGOAT FOR COMPLAINTS ABOUT ECONOMIC REFORM, WILL
BE SHIFTED TO THE CENTRAL BANK PRESIDENCY. (IN A
BREAKFAST WITH THE AMBASSADOR -- SEPTTEL --, RODRIGUEZ

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J OLSON
DATE/CASE ID: 21 JUL 2006 200503206

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CONFIRMED THAT CAP IS CONSIDERING THIS MOVE.) TODAY'S PRESS SPECULATION CENTERS AROUND FIVE CABINET CHANGES: PLANNING, TREASURY, EDUCATION, INTERIOR, AND SECRETARIAT OF THE PRESIDENCY.

3. CAP'S PRESS CONFERENCE IN SAN CRISTOBAL

ON FEBRUARY 19 CAP VISITED THE STATE OF TACHIRA, HIS BIRTHPLACE. IN A PRESS CONFERENCE IN SAN CRISTOBAL, CAP STATED THAT:

-- THE ISSUANCE OF ARREST WARRANTS FOR THE 33 OFFICERS WAS "FULLY JUSTIFIED" BECAUSE (THE OFFICERS) HAD COMMITTED A "GRAVE OFFENSE AGAINST THE COUNTRY" RESULTING IN DEATHS ON BOTH SIDES;

-- HE DOES NOT BELIEVE A COALITION GOVERNMENT IS REQUIRED SINCE THERE IS NO EMERGENCY SITUATION;

-- ALL SUSPENDED CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES WILL BE
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RESTORED WITHIN TWO TO THREE WEEKS; AND

-- THE COUP ATTEMPT "PERMITTED THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE VENEZUELAN DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM."

4. AD GOING AHEAD WITH MORALES BELLO NOMINATION

AD CONFIRMED ITS INTENTION TO NOMINATE SENATOR DAVID MORALES BELLO FOR THE POSITION OF PRESIDENT OF THE CONGRESS (AND THEREFORE, FIRST IN LINE OF SUCCESSION TO THE PRESIDENCY OF VENEZUELA). LEADERS OF TWO OPPOSITION PARTIES, COPEI AND MAS, HAD EXPRESSED THEIR OPPOSITION TO THIS NOMINATION BECAUSE OF MORALES' REPUTATION FOR CORRUPTION. ON FEBRUARY 20, HOWEVER, THE PRESS REPORTED NEITHER PARTY HAD MADE A DEFINITE DECISION ON THE ISSUE. THE VOTING WILL TAKE PLACE MARCH 4.

THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE MORALES BELLO QUESTION LIES IN ITS POTENTIAL DANGER TO THE LONG-STANDING "INSTITUTIONAL AGREEMENT", AN INFORMAL MECHANISM FOR SHARING IMPORTANT OFFICES THAT HAS BEEN REGARDED AS ONE OF THE MAINSTAYS OF THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM. HENRY RAMOS ALLUP, CHIEF OF THE AD FACTION IN CONGRESS, COMMENTED IRONICALLY ON FEBRUARY 19 THAT BREAKING THE INSTITUTIONAL PACT WILL

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"DO A VERY THIN FAVOR TO THE STABILITY OF THE SYSTEM."
ANOTHER COMPLICATING FACTOR IS ALLEGED MILITARY
UNHAPPINESS WITH MORALES BELLO, BASED ON HIS FEB. 4 CALL
(PERHAPS RHETORICAL) FOR "DEATH TO THE COUP PLOTTERS."

MEANWHILE, MORALES BELLO HAS REMAINED QUIET, COMMENTING
ONLY THAT THE OPPOSITION TO HIS NOMINATION IS "MORE
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PERSONAL THAN POLITICAL."

5. EDITORIAL PRAISES CAP FOR NOT ATTENDING SUMMIT

EL DIARIO DE CARACAS OF FEBRUARY 20 EXPRESSED
SATISFACTION AT THE INDICATION FROM AD PRESIDENT
HUMBERTO CELLI ON FEBRUARY 18 THAT CAP MAY NOT ATTEND
THE DRUG SUMMIT IN SAN ANTONIO. THE PAPER COMMENTED
THAT THIS "IS A VERY WISE PRESIDENTIAL DECISION (SINCE)
THERE ARE MANY (REMAINING) ISSUES THAT REQUIRE THE
DIRECT AND PERSONAL ATTENTION OF THE CHIEF OF STATE."
(COMMENT: THE LAST OFFICIAL WORD WE HAVE HAD FROM THE
GOV WAS ON FEB. 18, WHEN WE WERE TOLD THAT CAP WOULD
ATTEND.)

6. MOD: "DIALOGUE NOT BAYONETS WILL BRING CHANGE"

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SUBJECT: PART 12: AFTER THE COUP ATTEMPT - FEBRUARY 20

 MINISTER OF DEFENSE FERNANDO OCHOA ANTICH PAID A
 SURPRISE VISIT TO TROOPS IN MARACAIBO ON FEBRUARY 19.
 HE APPARENTLY INFORMED ARMY PERSONNEL ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS
 IN THE ARMED FORCES SINCE THE COUP ATTEMPT OF FEBRUARY
 4. WHILE THERE THE DEFENSE MINISTER OBSERVED THAT "THE
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 WHOLE COUNTRY IS AWARE OF THE NECESSITY FOR CHANGE, BUT
 (CHANGE) IS NOT OBTAINED AT THE POINT OF BAYONETS BUT
 THROUGH DIALOGUE AND COMPROMISE."

7. CLAIMED RESULTS OF SECRET POLLS PUBLISHED

 EL DIARIO DE CARACAS ON FEBRUARY 20 GAVE FRAGMENTARY
 RESULTS OF POLLS ALLEGEDLY CONDUCTED FOR THE GOV AFTER
 THE ATTEMPTED COUP D'ETAT. RATING THE POPULARITY OF
 INDIVIDUALS, THE FIRST SHOWED ARRESTED COUP LEADER HUGO
 CHAVEZ FRIAS LEADING EX-PRESIDENT RAFAEL CALDERA BY 20
 POINTS. A POLL CONDUCTED A FEW DAYS LATER HAD CHAVEZ
 BEHIND CALDERA. (EL DIARIO DID NOT PROVIDE FURTHER
 INFORMATION, NOR DID IT SAY EXACTLY WHEN THE POLLS WERE
 CONDUCTED.) THE PAPER THEN CLAIMED THAT THE RESULTS OF
 THE LATEST POLL (NO DATE GIVEN) SHOW CALDERA WITH A 72
 PERCENT RATE OF ACCEPTANCE, FOLLOWED BY CAP WITH 8

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PERCENT, AND EDUARDO FERNANDEZ WITH 6 PERCENT. WHEN
ASKED ABOUT HIS LOW APPROVAL RATING, CAP CLAIMED THE
POLL WAS "TOTALLY FALSE...THERE HAS NOT BEEN TIME FOR
ANY COMPANY TO DO A NATIONAL POLL." TO WHICH A
NEWSPAPER RESPONDED: THE LAST-MENTIONED POLL WAS DONE
BY PENN AND SCHOEN IN CARACAS AND SURVEYED 560 PEOPLE.
WE HAVE HEARD SEPARATELY FROM AN AD LEADER THAT THERE
WAS SUCH A POLL, THAT CAP WAS FURIOUS WHEN ONE OF THE
ONLY TWO COPIES MADE OF IT LEAKED TO THE PRESS, AND THAT
THE GOV PERSUADED AT LEAST ONE NEWSPAPER NOT TO PRINT
THE FULL TEXT OF IT.
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